

Subject: Re: [E] Article Correction
Date: Tue, 10 Nov 2020 19:44:55 -0500
From: Pamela Pennington - ZM <pamela.pennington@gsa.gov>
To: Trent Benishek - L <trent.benishek@gsa.gov>, Rob Borden - AC <robert.borden@gsa.gov>, Jeff Post - S <jeffrey.post@gsa.gov>
Message-ID: <CAMFu_ =QbsVsakZhhe6cyRbZf1PMQWxg4r4nawo+1aoVOP4-OQg@mail.gmail.com>
MD5: d365a030fd80aae49ae29fdb7f26ab39

Been on phone with reporter. He is correcting the article - we're working through the details. Will send link once it's updated.

Pamela Pennington
202-368-4761

Press Secretary
Deputy Associate Administrator for Media Affairs
Office of Strategic Communication
U.S. General Services Administration
pamela.pennington@gsa.gov

On Tue, Nov 10, 2020 at 7:01 PM Pamela Pennington - ZM <pamela.pennington@gsa.gov> wrote:

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Press Secretary
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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Alexander Nazaryan** <(b) (6) [verizonmedia.com](mailto:(b) (6)@verizonmedia.com)>
Date: Tue, Nov 10, 2020 at 6:58 PM
Subject: Re: [E] Article Correction
To: Pamela Pennington - ZM <pamela.pennington@gsa.gov>

Sorry it has taken so long to get back to you in this. The stuff about his uncle will be corrected at once. Re what Rep. Khanna said - can use on background what you told me re the hiring?

On Tue, Nov 10, 2020 at 5:17 PM Pamela Pennington - ZM <pamela.pennington@gsa.gov> wrote:

Hi Alexander,

Following up on our phone call. As agreed and discussed, I'm sharing this information on

background, not attribution:

You just authored an [article](#) regarding GSA and our General Counsel that contains multiple

inaccuracies and false statements. However, you never reached out to GSA regarding this

matter, asking for comment or reaction, or to verify the items that the article falsely reports. If

you had reached out, like several other prominent news outlets did, you would have heard the

facts and realized that there was no story here. In fact, the Washington Post [acknowledged](#) that

the hiring of our general counsel was a "normal move."

As I explained to the other outlets, it is routine and common practice for appointees to take new

positions during an administration. In this instance, our previous general counsel accepted a

position in the private sector and subsequently left our agency in October. We announced the

departure in an internal agencywide note, news outlets were also made aware of the news but

chose not to report on it. As is routine, we filled the position with the person who was qualified,

experienced, and the best fit for the role, which in this case was Mr. Benishek. His hiring would

have occurred regardless of an election. As with all leadership exits and hires, GSA was open

and transparent. GSA notified all employees about the hiring of Mr. Benishek and sent a press

release the day he was hired. We also immediately updated our [website](#) with his name, title,

biography, and photo. At no point was he "quietly dispatched" to GSA. Quite the opposite, the

decision was strictly Mr. Benishek's and GSA's, and GSA announced his hiring, as he is a

qualified leader and attorney.

Below are the false statements and blatant inaccuracies in your article - including the lede. I

explain how each one is untrue and I request that the information be removed or updated to

accurately reflect the facts.

Inaccurate Statement: *“Five days before the presidential election, President Trump quietly*

dispatched attorney Trent Benishek of the White House general counsel’s office to the General

Services Administration.” This statement is false, has no basis in fact, and serves only to

mislead the public. Therefore, please remove it from your article:

I

President Trump did not “dispatch” Mr. Benishek to GSA. It is false to state or imply that the President

was involved in Mr. Benishek’s hiring decision. Mr. Benishek sought this position on his own volition.

I

Mr. Benishek’s hiring was not unusual. He was hired through the normal process that occurs when

appointed positions become available and there is a qualified candidate at another agency who is

interested in the role. He interviewed for the position and was an excellent candidate based on his

qualifications and experience. He received an offer and accepted. This decision was squarely Mr.

Benishek's choice. The move made professional sense, as it gave him additional responsibility as the

leader of an office with nearly 140 attorneys. This is a common professional move within government.

I

Furthermore, GSA's hiring of Mr. Benishek was not "quiet." In fact, GSA was open and transparent. We

issued an agency-wide note announcing his hiring and a [press release](#) the same day. This is GSA's

standard practice (not "obligatory" as you opine), and in fact, we often issue the internal notes to just

GSA leaders. In Mr. Benishek's case, we sent it agency-wide.

I

The timing of Mr. Benishek’s arrival at GSA was strictly based on his predecessor’s departure for the

private sector, which was the prior week. It was unrelated to the election. Any speculation to the

contrary is not accurate, nor supported by any facts, and therefore misleading to the public.

Article Statement: *“However, Khanna went on to say, Benishek could direct Murphy to slow*

down the transition, which could buy the Trump campaign more time to find new means to

reverse the will of the American electorate.” The contents within this statement are false, purely

speculative, have no basis in fact or law, and should therefore be removed.

I

action. Furthermore, it is pure speculation to report on what someone “could” advise another

individual.

I

You offered Rep. Khanna the opportunity to comment and speculate, yet you did not even offer GSA

the courtesy of responding and sharing facts. If you had shared Rep. Khanna’s statement with us, we

would have been able to inform you it was false and prevent inaccurate information from being

published.

Article Statement: *“Later, he served as the finance director for his father Dan Benishek, who*

delegation.” This statement is patently false as Dan Benishek is not Mr. Benishek’s father nor

did he represent Michigan. As this statement is false and misleading, it should be removed:

|

Dan Benishek is Trent Benishek’s uncle, not his father.

|

Dan Benishek was a congressman from Michigan, not Wisconsin

|

Trent Benishek never served as “finance director” for Dan Benishek. In 2010, during the few months

after law school and before he started his job at a law firm, he served as the press secretary for the

campaign during the general election. He later served as treasurer, but he did not receive any payment

Article Statement: *In 2013, the elder Benishek was accused of improper use of private aircraft,*

and his son, the future White House lawyer, represented his father before the Federal Election

Commission. Again this statement is false and misleading, it should be removed:

I

Dan Benishek is not Trent Benishek's father. As noted above, Dan Benishek is the uncle of Trent

Benishek.

I

Trent Benishek did not represent Dan Benishek before the FEC. The event at issue in the FEC matter

occurred in 2010 before Trent Benishek was affiliated with the campaign. His name was later added to

the caption of the FEC matter “in his official capacity as Treasurer,” even though the event at issue

predated his tenure. Other attorneys represented Dan Benishek throughout this process.

Article Statement: *“Benishek first came to Washington in 2002 as a delegate for youth*

government, intended to work on mock-legislation ‘to ban flag-burning.’” Again, this statement is

inaccurate, incendiary, and very misleading. It should therefore be removed:

I

Almost two decades ago in 2002, when Mr. Benishek was a minor and in high school, he participated in

the American Legion Boys Nation program, the same program President Clinton attended when he was

was in no way “intended” to work on mock legislation regarding flag burning. The purpose of programs

like Boys Nation and Girls Nation are to give high schoolers a better understanding of our legislative

system. The program is in no way focused on promoting any specific issues, especially controversial

ones, and student participants are encouraged to learn and debate both sides of these issues. The is a

blatant misrepresentation of the program that Mr. Benishek participated in 18 years ago while a high

school student, nor is it in any way relevant to Mr. Benishek’s role as General Counsel.

It also appears that you are now tweeting additional false statements regarding Mr. Benishek.

I

campaign a decade ago, and he later served as his uncle's campaign treasurer in a volunteer capacity.

He has not worked for any campaigns or political parties since that time (nor did he work on any prior).

Instead, he worked as an attorney for eight years at a law firm in DC.

I

Don McGahn was never Trent Benishek's "boss" in White House Counsel's Office. Mr. McGahn left the

White House before Trent was hired. **This is false and therefore I respectfully request this tweet be**

removed.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. Please call me if you have any questions.

been removed.

Thank you,

Pamela

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